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Selected Speeches and News Releases

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News Releases

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FIRM TO MARKET USDA INVENTION THAT HARMLESSLY COLLECTS WHITE BLOOD CELLS

WASHINGTON, March 31—A Colorado company has obtained an exclusive license to manufacture a U.S. Department of Agriculture invention that harmlessly collects white blood cells from a variety of animals for disease research and possibly for use in future diagnostic tests.

“The device collects white blood cells ten times more efficiently than current methods and is harmless to the animal. The same animal can be used again in later research,” said the inventor, microbiologist Phillip H. Klesius of USDA’s Agricultural Research Service. He developed the collector to study the role of certain white blood cells, called macrophages, in cattle’s immunity to parasitic infections.

Whale Scientific, Inc., Commerce City, Colo., obtained the license and expects a commercial version of the new cell collector to be ready for marketing to animal researchers this spring, said company president Barbara G. Griffin.

Klesius, who holds a patent on the collector, said it “has been tested in cattle, guinea pigs and rabbits.” He said the collector “has not been tested in humans, but it appears promising for medical uses.”

The collector, a one- by two-inch plastic cylinder with tiny holes, is inserted inside an animal—between the abdomen and the abdominal lining—to mimic an infection. The immune system responds by sending a “hit squad” of macrophages, which rush inside the device and are trapped, said Klesius of the Animal Parasite Research Laboratory, Auburn, Ala.

A nylon or latex covering keeps out other tissue, and tiny inlet and outlet tubes allow scientists to harvest macrophages by using suction, he said.

Griffin said the device “can be left in place for long periods and is easily removed.” The company has produced more than 20 products for clinical and research laboratories, she said.

Vince Mazzola (301) 344-1712

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO ASSIST USDA ON ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL ISSUES

WASHINGTON, March 31—Secretary of Agriculture Richard E. Lyng has established a National Animal Damage Control Advisory Committee to advise him on policy, program issues and research needed to control depredating animals that reduce agricultural production.

“The economic losses to farmers and ranchers from such animals are estimated at more than \$300 million per year and often represent the difference between profit and loss for many producers,” said Lyng.

USDA must maintain an effective program to control depredating animals, such as blackbirds, rodents and coyotes, in ways that are biologically, economically and environmentally sound. Along with these traditional predator programs, control of bird and animal nuisances and hazards at airports is essential.

According to Lyng, the committee also will serve as a public forum so that ranchers, farmers and other wildlife interests may have a voice in USDA’s animal damage control policies.

Members appointed to the committee include representatives of livestock, grain, forestry and aquaculture industries and environmental, wildlife conservation, state government, academic and humane interests.

Kenneth A. Gilles, assistant secretary of agriculture for marketing and inspection services, will serve as chairman and James W. Glosser, acting administrator of USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, will serve as vice chairman.

Others members are:

Robert Anderson, Federal Way, Wash.; Floyd Anderson, Brockett, N.D.; Jack Berryman, Fairfax, Va.; Robert Bash, Pickerington, Ohio; Mike Cassabonne, Hope, N.M.; Richard Ekstrum, Kimball, S.D.; Dr. John Fitch, Bedford, Mass.; Dr. John Grandy, Washington, D.C.; Floyd Grigory, San Ardo, Calif.; Dr. Walter Howard, Davis, Calif.; Debra Hughes, Carlsbad, N.M.; Jay Kirkpatrick, Billings, Mont.; Lester Meyers, Isola, Miss.; Carol Porter, Washington, D.C.; Donald Rolston, Cheyenne, Wyo.; Dr. David Robinette, Clemson, S.C.; John Shafer, Timagua, Pa.; Jeffery Siddoway, Terreton, Idaho; Nick Theos, Meeker, Colo.; and Robert Turner, Voss, Texas.

Nancy Robinson (202) 447-8014

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USDA EXTENDS COMMENT PERIOD ON PROPOSAL TO “UNCOUPLE” BEEF GRADING ACTIVITY

WASHINGTON, March 31—The U.S. Department of Agriculture will extend to June 6 the comment period on its February proposal to separate, or “uncouple,” its grading of carcass beef and slaughter cattle for quality from grading for yield. The previous deadline for comments was April 4.

J. Patrick Boyle, administrator of USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service, said that the extension, sought by a beef industry group, gives industry the additional time it wants to study the proposal carefully.

According to Boyle, the proposed rule would allow the beef industry to determine whether to have carcasses graded by USDA for quality, or for yield, or both. Currently, a carcass must be graded both for quality and yield, or not graded at all.

The proposal to uncouple these beef grading activities originated in a joint petition from the American Meat Institute and the National Cattlemen’s Association. Central to the proposal are new, more efficient technologies now available for preparing beef carcasses. One of these technologies is “hot-fat trimming,” which is trimming fat just after slaughter rather than after chilling, as is current practice.

The proposal was published in the Feb. 3 Federal Register. Notice of the extension of the comment period will be published in the April 1 Federal Register. Comments on the “uncoupling” proposal should be sent postmarked no later than June 6 to the Standardization and Review Branch, AMS, USDA, Rm. 2649-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20290-6456.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

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NEW CONSERVATION PROGRAM PROPOSALS ANNOUNCED

WASHINGTON, March 31—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today released for public comment a proposed program to guide its soil and water conservation policies and activities for the next decade.

Wilson Scaling, chief of USDA’s Soil Conservation Service, said USDA proposes to continue its efforts to control soil erosion on the

nation's farmland by aggressively implementing the conservation provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill.

Other objectives include reducing agricultural nonpoint source pollution of water, improving irrigation efficiency, making more effective use of water, reducing upstream flood damages and improving range conditions.

The draft National Program for Soil and Water Conservation (1988-97) was developed in response to the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977, which directs the secretary of agriculture to periodically appraise the condition of the nation's soil, water and related resources and to update programs to deal with changed conditions.

The actions USDA will emphasize through 1997 include:

- giving priority to helping farmers and ranchers meet the requirements of the conservation provisions contained in the 1985 Farm Bill that tie USDA program benefits to soil and water conservation programs;
- strengthening the capability of state and local governments to meet soil and water conservation and water quality priorities by providing resource data and technical assistance;
- expanding assistance to small-scale, limited resource and minority landowners;
- encouraging the application of cost-effective conservation measures,
- ensuring consistency among USDA commodity programs, trade policies and conservation programs,
- accelerating the transfer of research results to producers,
- facilitating access to USDA information systems by government and private sectors, and
- continuing research and information dissemination on the use of alternative farming systems.

The public may review the proposed National Conservation Program at local Soil Conservation Service and Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service offices. Written comments must be received by June 4 and should be sent to local SCS offices, located in telephone directories under U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Kathy Gugulis (202) 447-9149

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USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET PRICE FOR UPLAND COTTON

WASHINGTON, March 31—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Thomas O. Kay today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (micronaire 3.5-4.9) upland cotton (base quality) and the coarse count adjustment in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, April 1, through 12:00 midnight Thursday, April 7.

Since the AWP is above the 1987-crop base quality loan rate of 52.25 cents per pound, the loan repayment rate for 1987-crop upland cotton during this period is equal to the loan rate for the specific quality and location.

The AWP will be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates. However, no coarse count adjustment will be applicable during the period because the adjustment is less than 1.00 cent per pound.

Based on data for the week ending March 31, the AWP for upland cotton and the coarse count adjustment are determined as follows:

Adjusted World Price

Northern Europe Price	66.09
Adjustments:	
Average U.S. spot market location	9.58
SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton	2.00
Average U.S. location44
Sum of Adjustments	<u>-12.02</u>
ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE	54.07 cents/lb.

Coarse Count Adjustment

Northern Europe Price	66.09
Northern Europe Coarse Count Price	<u>-61.64</u>
	4.45
Adjustment to SLM 1-inch cotton	<u>-6.25</u>
	-1.80
COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT	0 cents/lb.

The next AWP and coarse count adjustment announcement will be made April 7.

Charles Cunningham (202) 447-7954

Arthur Whitmore (202) 447-4026

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APRIL CCC LOAN INTEREST RATE LOWERED TO 6-5/8 PERCENT

WASHINGTON, April 1—Commodity loans disbursed in April by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Commodity Credit Corporation will carry a 6-5/8 percent interest rate, according to Vern Neppl, acting CCC executive vice president.

The 6-5/8 percent rate, down from 6-3/4 percent, reflects the interest rate charged CCC by the U. S. Treasury in April.

Robert Feist (202) 447-6789

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USDA ANNOUNCES 1988 CROP HONEY PRICE-SUPPORT PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, April 1—Secretary of Agriculture Richard E. Lyng today announced that the 1988 honey price-support program will be conducted solely through price-support loans and purchase agreements will not be offered.

The average price-support loan rate will be 59.10 cents per pound, in accordance with the Agriculture Act of 1949, as amended.

Extracted honey loan rates will range from 62.02 cents to 48.06 cents per pound, depending on color and class:

Color and/or class	Cents per pound
White.....	62.02
Extra-light amber	58.22
Light amber.....	53.66
Amber and nontable honey	48.06

Loans will be offered on 1988 crop honey in eligible containers on or off farms. Producers will have until March 31, 1989 to request 9-month loans.

Producers with honey price-support loans will be permitted to repay their loans at rates less than the price-support loan rates. These rates will be established at levels that will minimize loan forfeitures, reduce honey stocks and storage costs, and maintain the competitiveness of domestic honey in U.S. and export markets. The secretary of agriculture or a designee will determine and announce lower repayment rates weekly.

John C. Ryan (202) 447-6788

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FmHA PROPOSES TO DIRECT BUSINESS LOANS TO SMALLER COMPANIES

WASHINGTON, April 4—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farmers Home Administration has proposed to direct a higher proportion of its business and industry loan guarantees to smaller companies in areas of high unemployment, FmHA Administrator Vance L. Clark said today.

The proposal would change some of the rules of the FmHA Business and Industry Loan Guarantee Program, which furnishes guarantees for loans made by conventional lenders to provide jobs by establishing or expanding businesses in rural areas.

"As a general policy, we want to gear the limited B&I loan funds to smaller businesses in areas where they can provide jobs for rural people, especially displaced farmers," Clark said. "It's our experience that smaller enterprises usually are more labor intensive as well as locally owned and financed."

Under the proposal, loan guarantees would range from 70 to 90 percent of loan value, with the higher guarantees reserved for smaller loans.

The proposal would also permit state FmHA directors to waive, in some cases, certain costly application requirements, such as outside feasibility studies; independent appraisals and audited financial statements.

In addition, the proposal would create a point system for determining priority among B&I applications, based on which guaranteed loans generate the most jobs at the least cost in areas of high unemployment.

This proposal is in keeping with the administration's Rural Development Initiative, Clark said. "The proposed regulations would enable Farmers Home to direct federal dollars where they will do the most good in revitalizing rural America," he said.

The proposal was published March 29 in the Federal Register.

Ron Ence (202) 447-4323

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USDA SEEKS COMMENTS ON MAXIMUM PAYMENT LIMITATION PROVISIONS FOR 1989 CROPS

WASHINGTON, April 5—Vern Nepl, acting executive vice president of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation today asked for public comments on proposed rules defining a "person" for payment limitation purposes and for determining whether foreign persons will be eligible to receive certain program payments.

The maximum payment limitation provisions of the proposed rule apply to the commodity price support and production adjustment programs beginning with the 1989 crops, including the Conservation Reserve Program; the Rural Clean Water Program; the Agricultural Conservation Program; the Forestry Incentive Program; the Emergency Conservation Program; and the Colorado River Salinity Control Program.

In addition, the proposed rule provides that noncitizens, any person who is not an alien lawfully admitted into the U.S. for permanent residence, and entities owned by these persons would be ineligible to receive certain payments, unless these persons are providing land, capital, and a substantial amount of personal labor to the farming operation.

Details of the proposal appear in the April 6 Federal Register.

Send written comments by May 6 to: Director, Cotton, Grain and Rice Price Support Division, ASCS-USDA, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013.

Comments will be available for public inspection during business hours in room 3641-S of USDA's South Building, 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W.

John C. Ryan (202) 447-6788

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USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES

WASHINGTON, April 5—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Thomas O. Kay today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as:

- long grain whole kernels, 11.83 cents per pound;
- medium grain whole kernels, 10.46 cents per pound;
- short grain whole kernels, 10.36 cents per pound;
- broken kernels, 5.92 cents per pound.

Loan repayment rates for 1987 crop warehouse or farm-stored rice loans are the higher of the world prices or 50 percent of the loan rates.

Based upon these prevailing world market prices for milled rice, the estimated average world prices for 1987 crop rough rice are:

- long grain, \$7.12 per hundredweight;
- medium grain, \$6.54 per hundredweight;
- short grain, \$6.35 per hundredweight.

The prices announced are effective today at 3 p.m. EDT. The next scheduled price announcement will be made April 12 at 3 p.m. EDT, although prices may be announced sooner if warranted.

Gene Rosera (202) 447-5954

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SECOND-QUARTER 1988 MEAT IMPORT ESTIMATE BELOW TRIGGER LEVEL

WASHINGTON, April 5—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Thomas O. Kay today announced that the second-quarter estimate of U.S. meat imports for calendar year 1988 is below the level that would require quotas or restraints on imports under the Meat Import Act of 1979.

Kay said based on U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates of available supplies, imports of beef and other meats subject to the Meat Import Act during 1988 should total about 1,480 million pounds. This estimate is about 45 million pounds below the 1988 trigger level of 1,525.5 million pounds, indicating that import restrictions are not required at this time.

The Meat Import Act of 1979 requires the president to consider restrictions on imports of certain meats—primarily beef and veal—if a USDA quarterly estimate of meat imports equals or exceeds the trigger level set at the beginning of each calendar year by formula in the Act.

Imports of Meat Subject to Meat Import Act

	1985	1986	1987	1988
	<i>(Millions of Pounds)</i>			
January	53.9	77.7	44.4	135.6
February	87.0	102.2	138.2	112.3
March	87.0	83.2	84.9	153.0
April	94.6	70.8	146.0	
May	122.7	72.1	103.4	
June	84.0	148.4	135.4	
July	162.2	122.1	181.5	
August	104.2	144.0	137.4	
September	134.6	167.4	158.0	
October	138.0	119.8	153.8	
November	88.4	102.4	86.6	
December	156.6	129.2	86.4	
TOTAL*	1,318.6	1,339.3	1,456.0	

*Totals may not add due to rounding.

Sally Klusaritz (202) 447-3448

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USDA QUARANTINES 13 STATES INFESTED WITH VARROA MITE

WASHINGTON, April 6—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has restricted the interstate movement of bees and bee equipment from Florida, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Washington and Wisconsin because of infestations of the Varroa mite.

“We are quarantining these 13 states to keep Varroa mites from spreading into noninfested areas of the United States,” said Larry B. Slagle, acting associate administrator of USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. “This will help protect our beekeeping industry as well as the estimated \$20 billion worth of agricultural crops pollinated by bees each year.”

The Varroa mite is an external parasite of adult bees and their developing larvae, or brood. It causes decreased brood, deformed bees and weakening of the colony’s ability to pollinate plants and produce honey. Infestation can occur so gradually that the mites may go unnoticed until serious damage is done.

Varroa mites were first discovered in this country last September in a Wisconsin apiary. Since then, they have been found in 12 other states. Of the major honey-producing states, California and North Dakota are the only states unaffected by the mite so far. “Varroa mites can be spread by the movement of queen bees, package bees, hives, pollen, honeycomb with brood cells and apiary equipment and vehicles,” said Slagle. “Under our regulations, these articles will be prohibited from moving interstate from quarantined areas unless certain conditions are met.”

APHIS inspectors may issue a certificate for interstate movement when the regulated articles have been determined to present no pest risk, according to Slagle. In other cases, a limited permit may be issued to move articles that do present a pest risk, provided that additional precautions are taken.

A notice of this action, which is effective today, will be published in the April 11 Federal Register. An original and two copies of written comments may be sent to USDA-APHIS, Room 1143, South Building, P.O. Box 96464, Washington, D.C. 20090-6464. Comments should refer to Docket No. 87-140 and be postmarked or mailed by June 10.

Caree Lawrence (301) 436-6953

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STERILE TICKS WILL BE TEST-RELEASED IN VIRGIN ISLANDS TO HALT CATTLE FEVER

WASHINGTON, April 6—Sterile male cattle ticks will be test-released on one of the U.S. Virgin Islands in a U.S. Department of Agriculture experiment to broaden controls against cattle fever, a killer disease in cattle.

“We hope sterile releases will stop female ticks from producing new generations that would infest cattle,” said Ronald B. Davey, an entomologist with USDA’s Agricultural Research Service. Cattle fever or babesiosis, caused by the ticks, kills up to 80 percent of adult cattle that get it.

“Island people are safe from the disease,” he said. Humans are not bitten by the tick, he added, nor do they get the disease.

He said the experimental strategy, which will be tried for the first time late this year on St. Croix, is timely because the ticks are becoming resistant to chemicals. Sterile releases could reinforce chemical and other methods used in the U.S., he added, to prevent outbreaks of the ticks.

Controlled in the U.S. since the 1940’s, cattle fever is widespread in the Caribbean including the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, as well as in Mexico and many other areas, said Davey, an entomologist at the Cattle Tick Fever Research Laboratory, Mission, Tex. Cattle become anemic after the ticks bite them, injecting a protozoan parasite into the bloodstream.

Cattle ticks periodically sneak over the Mexican border into Texas, where a USDA eradication program stops them from spreading past a buffer zone. Davey said that the new strategy, if successful, will support the Texas program and could be used anywhere in the world the tick is a problem.

“These ticks are tough. If they were to get a strong hold again in the southern United States, the disease could devastate the southern cattle industry. All U.S. cattle breeds are susceptible,” he said.

The only effective control now is to dip cattle in chemicals called acaricides—a measure required for all cattle entering the U.S. But, Davey said, the tick’s growing resistance to available acaricides has scientists at the USDA research agency testing new chemicals as well as pursuing the sterile-release strategy.

The sterile males are hybrids that produce no offspring when they mate. Davey and colleagues derived them from breeding male *Boophilus*

annulatus ticks with female B. microplus ticks. Both species transmit the disease.

He will rear the hybrids at the Mission laboratory. They will be released on 130 wooded acres USDA has leased from the Virgin Islands government. He said the sterile releases could eliminate disease-causing cattle ticks from St. Croix in about a year.

The actual releases will be done by Joe Despina, an entomologist at the agency's Plant Disease and Insect Population Control Laboratory on St. Croix. About five hybrid ticks will be released for every free-living cattle tick, at two-month intervals, Davey estimated.

As a tick-borne disease, cattle fever ranks second in the world to East Coast fever in terms of economic risk, according to David Wilson of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. He is acting director of the tick eradication program in Puerto Rico, conducted by APHIS and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. He said that in 1985, without treatment, cattle fever could have caused an estimated \$15.5 million in cattle losses in Puerto Rico.

APHIS also runs the eradication program in the Texas buffer zone, which extends from Del Rio to the Gulf Coast.

Linda Cooke (309) 685-4011

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